



## UULMNJ BULLETIN NOVEMBER 2014

### FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I want to extend the best wishes from the UULMNJ Board as we begin the holiday season. These days are so filled with activities which in themselves are good but total to more than the 24 hours in each day. My wish for myself and for each of you is to maintain some central core of peace amidst the many competing and wonderful demands of the season.

The **Moral Monday Demonstration** on October 27th was a great success with about 60 UUs from many congregations participating in the demonstration. And UULMNJ was well represented. Our strong support for reform of the incarceration system was clearly evident. The serious occasion had the feeling of a joyous reunion of sorts, seeing UU friends from around the state and talking to new friends with similar commitments. You will see many familiar people in pictures of the demonstration at [www.uulmnj.org/12-news-events/uulmnj-news-and-events/243-uus-in-action-at-the-moral-monday-march-against-mass-incarceration-2.html](http://www.uulmnj.org/12-news-events/uulmnj-news-and-events/243-uus-in-action-at-the-moral-monday-march-against-mass-incarceration-2.html).

The Constitutional Amendment for bail reform passed. This is a key issue for our Ending the New Jim Crow Task Force. Thank you to all of those who worked tirelessly to get this Constitutional amendment passed. A special thanks to Task Force chair, Al Stawsky, for his passionate dedication to this issue.

The Board is extending our outreach into congregations through our Congregational Relations Committee (Elaine Nigam, Chair) and Development Committee (Nick Lewis, Chair). Our goal is to reach as many congregations as possible with one of several programs that are designed to provide information about UULMNJ goals and achievements and to give the opportunity for more involvement.

There are several options for these congregational programs:

- Justice Served: Review of UULMNJ goals, organization, accomplishments, opportunities to be involved; has been presented in Montclair and Morristown.
- Informal Sunday Service: UULMNJ Board members present the service based on Justice Served Model
- Sunday Service: Executive Director, Rev. Craig Hirshberg leads the Sunday service; followed by a program focused on UULMNJ.
- Video Program: Presentation of one of the new UULM social justice videos at a congregation with discussion led by UULMNJ or congregation member.
- Board Meeting: Board members present an overview of UULMNJ at a Congregation's Board Meeting.

Please contact me if you are interested and I will help to schedule an event (fprestianni@gmail.com).

*Frances Prestianni, President  
UULMNJ Board of Trustees*

**SAVE THE DATE – UULMNJ ANNUAL MEETING  
APRIL 18, 2015 IN MONTCLAIR**

**Keynote Speaker: Junius Williams**

Thirty-one years before Cory Booker, Junius Williams, another dynamic African-American Yale Law School graduate, moved to Newark with ambitions much like Booker's. Both had success, but their paths diverged, personifying divisions among those seeking to address America's urban problems.

While both agree on social issues, like gay marriage, Booker has sought the beneficence of Silicon Valley and Wall Street for their money and ideas. Williams, a progressive growth and redistributionist in the mold of Jesse Jackson, the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and New York's Mayor Bill de Blasio, believes change comes from the grassroots up, by building community-based movements.

Williams lost his run for Newark mayor in 1982, but he remained in the trenches as a street organizer, lawyer and public school advocate. His persuasive, engaging political memoir, "Unfinished Agenda, Urban Politics in the Era of Black Power," is a road map for addressing poverty, failing schools and crime.

Mr. Williams will be looking at race as it impacts the many issues UULMNJ addresses and ways UU's can become better community partners in social justice.

**Watch for more information in early 2015.**

**STAMP OUT DESPAIR**

The holidays can be extremely difficult for those who are spending them in immigration detention centers. The Legislative Ministry's Immigration Task Force has found a way to help, by participating in First Friend's ([www.firstfriendsnjny.org](http://www.firstfriendsnjny.org)) "Stamp Out Despair" project ([www.uulmnj.org/12-news-events/uulmnj-news-and-events/248-important-holiday-project-for-uu-congregations.html](http://www.uulmnj.org/12-news-events/uulmnj-news-and-events/248-important-holiday-project-for-uu-congregations.html)).

**YUUR VOICE VIDEOS COMING SOON!**

Rev. Craig Hirshberg has led a major effort to finalize videos working with Task Force Chairs. These half hour videos can be used as educational program in your congregation with discussion:

- **Economic Justice – Housing:** Rev. Eric Dobson of FairShare Housing and Joyce Campbell of Catholic Charities
- **Climate Change:** Rohn Hein, Jeff Tittle (Sierra Club, NJ) and Jim Walsh, (Food and Water Watch)
- **The New Jim Crow:** Al Stansky, Roseanne Scotti, Drug Policy Alliance, and Alex Shalom, ACLU
- **Immigration Detention:** Ted Fetter, Bill Westerman (First Friends) and Papa Faye, detainee
- **Immigration and Young Refugees:** Ted Fetter, Sally Palley (First Friends) Anna Bonilla-Martinez and Stuart Sydenstricker (Winds of the Spirit)

A video on **gun violence prevention** is also planned. Videos will be broadcast over the Princeton Community Television in December and will be hosted on UULMNJ's YouTube channel. Three study guides are available for the first three programs. A flyer will go out to the congregations as soon as details are finalized.

## **FALL ISSUES CONFERENCE – THE BEST ONE YET**

Attendees at UULMNJ's Fall Issues Conference in Paramus declared that *it was the best one yet*. It also attracted the largest crowd to date, with over 90 NJ UUs, plus members of the Metro District's Senior Youth Advisor Cooperative, in attendance. We were also delighted to welcome several representatives from the United Church of Christ, as we continue our exploration of establishing a cooperative relationship to work together on issues of common interest.

The Morning Worship by Rev. David Horst and Robin Slaw provided an inspirational start to the day, with the call to action *Got Anger? Get Hope!*, urging us to recognize our anger, but also our hope and to motivate us to move forward towards our goals for a just society.

UULMNJ President Frances Prestianni welcomed the group, noting that it is good to be together as we are often a virtual community. The board of trustees is starting a new program of small group meetings in congregations. These meetings can be held in church or someone's home, and through them hope to make UULMNJ "more real" and increase involvement. Contact Rev. Craig or a board member if you are interested in setting up a meeting for your congregation.

Keynote speaker Udi Ofer, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of NJ, noted that Rev. Craig is named in their annual report. ACLU-NJ has been fighting for civil rights for more than fifty years. The issue currently at the top of their list is over-incarceration in the United States. The US has 5% of the world's population, but 25% of its prisoners. Since 1970, the prison population has increased by 700%; more than half for non-violent offenses. African Americans and Latinos disproportionately bear the brunt of this over-incarceration. The war on drugs is a massive failure; the racial disparity is evident, with black communities targeted for arrest, though usage rates are comparable in black and white communities. The ACLU-NJ recently launched "Newark Communities for Accountable Policing," and will be launching similar initiatives around the state. They are also launching a new campaign to tax, regulate and legalize marijuana as part of their reform efforts. They want to shift the approach to the war on drugs, as they believe that this is the gateway to reforming the criminal justice system.

Rev. Craig highlighted the accomplishments of the past year, and Gary Nissebaum provided an update on UULMNJ's Legal Advocacy Project. In the day's closing remarks, Rev. Alison Miller said that even though this was a good day, we can do better in terms of the number of NJ UUs participating in these events. She challenged each congregation to bring 10 members to the Annual Meeting in April to help open the doors to a broader conversation for activism for the changes that we want to see.

The materials for the issues workshop will be posted on the UULMNJ website. Please share them with members of your congregation. You can also participate in the amazing opening service and hear our keynote speaker with the YouTube link on our home page at <http://www.uulmnj.org/>.

## **ISSUES UPDATE – PRIORITIES SET AT FALL ISSUES CONFERENCE**

If you are interested serving on a task force, contact the task force chair or [director@uulmnj.org](mailto:director@uulmnj.org). We are also looking for volunteers to serve on our *communications, congregational relations, development, and finance* committees, all critical to the well-being of UULMNJ. See our volunteer sign-up form for more options. Please contact Rev. Craig, UULMNJ President Frances Prestianni ([fprestianni@gmail.com](mailto:fprestianni@gmail.com)), or your congregational liaison to let us know how you would like to get involved.  
[http://www.uulmnj.org/images/documents/annualmeeting2014/VolunteerSignup\\_April\\_2014.pdf](http://www.uulmnj.org/images/documents/annualmeeting2014/VolunteerSignup_April_2014.pdf).

At UULMNJ's Annual Fall Issues Conference, our task forces had the opportunity to hold breakout sessions over lunch. During this time, some had guest speakers; they also selected priority issues for the coming year.

### ***Criminal Justice Reform, End the New Jim Crow, Task Force***

The task force saw its current priorities realized with the passage of Bail Reform legislation and the Opportunity to Compete Act. (<http://www.njisj.org/2014/06/legislature-passes-the-opportunity-to-compete-act/>). They noted that one of the best functions they can serve is to facilitate education, starting with our congregations. The task force heard from guest speaker Meagan Glaser, Deputy Director of the Drug Policy Alliance/New Solutions Campaign (<http://www.drugpolicy.org/newjersey>) during their breakout session.

Priorities identified:

- Passage of Ballot Question #1 in November to amend NJ's constitution to enable implementation of the Bail Reform Act, which was passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor this past summer. The state Constitution currently requires that judges set bail for all crimes, including murder. Ballot Question #1 will change the language in the State Constitution to allow judges discretion in whether or not to assign bail. (*Ballot Question #1 passed on November 4.*)
- Moving forward on parole reform. Half of the people in jail are there for non-violent offenses, yet are often not granted parole because parole boards are afraid to do so.
- Educate our UU congregations on the issue of marijuana legalization as part of their efforts around mass incarceration reform.

Chair: Al Stawsky, [alynways@gmail.com](mailto:alynways@gmail.com)

### ***Economic Justice***

Arnold Cohen, Senior Policy Coordinator, Housing Community Development Network of New Jersey ([www.hcdnnj.org](http://www.hcdnnj.org)) was the guest speaker for the breakout session. The task force identified affordable housing as their priority issue. New Jersey is one of the most expensive states to live in. They will continue to work in partnership with the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey and the Anti-Poverty Network (<http://www.antipovertynetwork.org/>).

UULMNJ was one of the organizations signing on to the following from the APN: "The Anti-Poverty Network, the Housing and Community Development Network, and other anti-poverty partners collected 61 organizational sign-ons for a common sense step the state can take to address the need for affordable housing. In these tight budget times, we need to use all the resources available and there is a large pot of money designated for affordable housing at the municipal level. This money has already been collected in municipal Affordable Housing Trust Funds. It cannot be used, however, until COAH releases it. COAH took a first step in August to release \$14 million. We are asking Commissioner Constable to convene COAH regularly, starting in October, to approve more plans and ensure that this important resource can be used."

[http://www.antipovertynetwork.org/Resources/Documents/Housing%20Trust%20Fund%20signon\\_added%20organizations.pdf](http://www.antipovertynetwork.org/Resources/Documents/Housing%20Trust%20Fund%20signon_added%20organizations.pdf)

Chair: Lorraine Wearley [lorrainewearley@gmail.com](mailto:lorrainewearley@gmail.com)

### ***Environmental Justice***

The task force's priority for the coming year is to work toward's NJ Free's energy goal of 80% renewable electricity in New Jersey by 2050.

Other area of interest:

- The People’s Climate March was a great opportunity to demonstrate that there is interest and concern about the state of the earth, but now will need to follow up with meaningful action.
- What congregations can do around environmental issues and green practices
- Also: a fracking waste transportation bill, stopping pipelines from going through sensitive areas, getting New Jersey back into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), and the development of wind power.

Chair: Rohn Hein, [rohh@netzero.net](mailto:rohh@netzero.net).

### ***Gun Violence Prevention***

The gun violence prevention task force continues to work with New Jersey Together to get New Jersey municipalities to use their buying power to get gun manufacturers to stop selling to rogue dealers and invest in smart gun technology. An update on this effort is posted on the UULMNJ website.

Chair: Diane Finn [finnflynn@verizon.net](mailto:finnflynn@verizon.net)

### ***Immigration***

The Immigration Task Force welcomed guest speaker Sally Pillay, Program Director for First Friends (<http://www.firstfriendsnjny.org/>) to their breakout session. The task force encourages congregations to build partnerships with First Friends, support the drives that they do periodically, and to visit detention centers. They also suggested participating in inter-congregational film series.

Their priority issue for the coming year will be wage theft legislation, as well as drivers licenses for undocumented people.

Chair: Ted Fetter [fetter4@verizon.net](mailto:fetter4@verizon.net)

### ***Healthcare and Reproductive Justice***

Dr. Lynn Roberts, Assistant Professor at the CUNY School of Public Health and a founding board of *Sistersong* Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, was the task force’s guest speaker. She explained that the reproductive justice framework - the right to have children, not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments - is based on the human right to make personal decisions about one’s life, and the obligation of government and society to ensure that the conditions are suitable for implementing one’s decisions.

The focus of the task force is safe access to reproductive health services, and to speak to the other task forces about intersections and ways to work together. The task force will also bring on intimate partner violence, starting with research and education.

Chair: Rev. Kathleen Green [usr.minister@verizon.net](mailto:usr.minister@verizon.net)

### **PASSAGE OF BALLOT QUESTION #1 ALLOWS ENACTMENT OF REAL BAIL REFORM IN NEW JERSEY**

At any given time up to 15,000 individuals in New Jersey jails are awaiting hearings on their cases. More than half of these individuals are being held on charges for nonviolent offenses. Many of them could be released on bail pending trial but lack the financial resources to pay the arbitrary bail amounts set by the current NJ bail schedule. Over 40% of those held in county jails are there solely because of their inability to pay bail; and the average length of time that these men and women spend in jail is almost a year. Suspects who pose no danger to the community are warehoused in jails for months, and even years, if

they can't afford often small amounts of money bail. At the same time, the most dangerous suspects can be quickly released because they have access to financial resources.

In response to this issue, in June, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, the Bail Reform Act. This new law will encourage non-monetary release options, require arrestees to undergo a risk assessment before their initial bail hearing, and establish pretrial service agencies within each county to monitor and counsel those awaiting trial. The passage of Ballot Question #1 on November 4 amended the language in the State Constitution to allow judges discretion in whether or not to assign bail.

There is more work to be done, but this is an important step forward for the equitable treatment of people in our criminal justice system.

Read the ACLU-NJ's statement, *Vote Cements Historic Bail Reform in New Jersey*, at <http://custapp.marketvolt.com/cv.aspx?cm=554018823&x=8663922&cust=5513842>.

### **SIGN UP FOR UULMNJ NEWS AND ACTION ALERTS**

Do you want to get more information about upcoming events, educational events, local legislation, and action alerts? Please send your contact information to [admin@uulmnj.org](mailto:admin@uulmnj.org) and we will sign you up. And follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/uulmnj](http://www.facebook.com/uulmnj)) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/uulmnj>)!

### **OUR DENOMINATION**

#### **From the UUA**

##### ***Will You Commit2Respond?***

We are facing a climate crisis. Recognizing the interdependence of all life, we are called as people of faith and conscience to heal and sustain the planet we call home. Climate change is a moral issue, and Commit2Respond is our moral response. UUs and all people of faith and conscience are invited to join this brand new initiative for climate justice. <http://www.commit2respond.org/>

##### ***Study guide helps congregations explore “Escalating Inequality”***

A study guide (pdf) for the 2014–2018 Congregational Study/Action Issue “Escalating Inequality” is now available from the Unitarian Universalist Association. The study guide offers resources to help UU congregations educate themselves on classism and economic inequality, and to explore possible actions they might take to effect change. <http://www.uua.org/economic/escalatinginequality/index.shtml>

##### ***Reproductive Justice Statement of Conscience – Congregational Feedback Sought***

The proposed Statement of Conscience (SOC) on reproductive justice has been released by the Commission on Social Witness. Your congregation is invited to comment on the proposed Statement of Conscience (SOC) on Reproductive Justice and vote to place the proposed SOC on the Final Agenda of the 2015 General Assembly. Comments are due February 2, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time. The draft statement and information on the congregational poll can be found at <http://www.uua.org/statements/current/index.shtml>.

#### **Unitarian Universalist Service Committee**

##### ***Guest at Your Table***

Guest at Your Table is an annual fundraising and education program that supports UUSC's human rights work. This year's Guest at Your Table theme is food sustainability. We invite everyone to take part: individuals, families, small groups, congregations, and community organizations. - See more at: <http://www.uusc.org/participate-guest-at-your-table#hostdinner>

***Choose Compassionate Consumption***

UUSC defends living wages, fair trade, and workers' right to organize — and you are essential to these efforts. You have the power to make a difference in the lives of workers, especially workers in the food chain, every day when you make choices that align with your values of justice and equality.

<http://www.uusc.org/campaigns/choose-compassionate-consumption>

Sustainable shopping that makes real change! Proceeds from the Good Buy fund human rights programs around the world administered by UUSC, so you can make a difference with each purchase.

<http://www.thegoodbuy.com/>

**NY Metro District:** [www.uumetrony.org](http://www.uumetrony.org)

**Joseph Priestley District:** [www.jpduua.org](http://www.jpduua.org)

**Central East Regional Group:** [www.cerguua.org/](http://www.cerguua.org/)

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU**

Do you have an event or announcement that you would like included in our bulletin? We would especially like to include news about the many social justice events and initiatives that New Jersey's UU congregations are involved with. Send an email to [director@uulmnj.org](mailto:director@uulmnj.org) and let us know what you are up to so that we can share it with others across our state.